

"Oh," I said, "today? All right, I'll go and put on my uniform and report today."

He said: "Don't even bother to put on your uniform. Put on a suit of civilian clothes and get the hell in here." Those were Barney's exact words.

So I went up, took off my working shorts, put on a suit of civilian clothes couldn't find my orders, as a matter of minor information, and reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I was immediately told of the Cuban crisis and that I was to acquaint myself with all aspects of the naval operations immediately, and that that afternoon I was to attend the Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting in order to familiarize myself with the situation, as it existed, and to act basically as a naval action officer within J-3. J-3 was the operations section of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Q: At that stage of the game, nothing had been made public on the crisis?

Adm. C.: The tensions had been rising, as I remember, but nothing had been made public as to the deployment of the Soviet missiles.

Q: Nothing, except Senator Keating, I suppose?

Adm. C.: I believe Senator Keating had, and I believe it was

rumored, and, of course, this was known in the Joint Chiefs of Staff at that time.

So there I was thrown into the Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting, and I might add that I arrived home that night, or the next morning, at one o'clock, having spent the entire day. Finally, one of the administrative people in the Joint Chiefs of Staff turned to me and said:

"Admiral, you haven't any orders. You haven't even been cleared to go into the meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

I said: "I realize that, but I think you'd better speak to someone else about it, because I was told to go and, believe me, I went!"

Obviously, at that particular time, the atmosphere in the Joint Chiefs of Staff was very tense. I became an action officer, along with my contemporaries, throughout the Cuban crisis - the Cuban Missile Crisis, I guess it was called. It seemed to me that we never got home at night. We were in the Pentagon practically every day until six, seven, eight, ten, eleven, or twelve o'clock at night. Finally, as the crisis heightened, we set a watch. Prior to that time, there had always been a captain on watch in the operations center, and as I remember, we thought it a little bit humorous that eventually it was considered that with the President being personally interested, as you could well understand, the captain was not adequate to answer the telephone, so there had to be a general or flag officer on duty at all times in the operations center for J-3. So the three of us who were deputies for operations,

one who has gone on to be Chief of the Pacific Air Forces, General Clay, who was then a brigadier general - Lucius Clay, my other contemporary was General Tibbetts, who was the pilot of the Enola Gay, and my boss was General Fin Unger. He was Army, the other two were Air Force. There was also an Army deputy whose name escapes me right now, I know, General Surba. He went to Fort Meade and died just about a year or so ago, a very sound and able man who was one of the troop commanders on Project Big Lift, which was that mammoth airlift to Europe designed to test the mobility of our forces and their ability to react quickly to a crisis situation.

So the four of us did around-the-clock watches during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Q: And the chairman of the Joint Chiefs was Maxwell Taylor?

Adm. C.: Yes, and Herb Riley was the Director of the Joint Staff. The Joint Staff, as I'm sure you remember, was organized along the lines of a conventional staff. The sections were the intelligence section, J-3, which was later taken over by the Defense Intelligence Agency; the J-3, which was ours, the operations section; J-4, which was the logistics section; and J-5, which was the plans section. All were headed by flag or general officers and all had flag or general officers as deputies. The operations section, as I said, had three - no, four actually. I had relieved a Marine, Paul Fontanna, as a service

replacement, and I was in turn relieved by an Air Force general. It was a completely joint operation.

I was fortunate to be present during the deliberations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that resulted in recommendations made to the President. I felt very much a part of the crisis, as it unfolded.

Q: Can you talk about some of the details of your job?

Adm. C.: The details of my job were trying to keep track of the naval forces and trying to inform the Chiefs of their capabilities, their reaction times, what they could do, what they couldn't do, so that they could draw logical conclusions from the capabilities on hand at any given time.

Q: This, then, kept you in direct touch with Admiral Dennison?

Adm. C.: Well, Admiral Dennison, of course, came up himself on numerous occasions, but I was in touch with CinCInLant, Admiral Dennison and I worked very closely with the Navy in their war room or their operations center.

Q: This being Admiral Anderson?

Adm. C.: This was Admiral Anderson. For example, one of my jobs that I remember rather vividly was to develop a paper on

what happens and how we react if another plane is shot down. As I remember, one was shot down, some sort of photographic plane. What do we do if another one is shot down? We would prepare the basic papers, which, of course, were only prepared at the staff level.

As I remember, one Sunday we had worked on a paper and I had to send it to State for coordination and I had to send it, of course, to the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs for coordination who, at that time, was Mr. Nitze. Each put his changes on it and when it came back it was sort of written as we had originally drafted it, which always amused me because it reflected the thinking of both and then came back to mine. I was unduly proud about it, but I might add that I got over that very quickly. The fact that I had written the paper, it had been changed by such illustrious gentlemen, and finally changed back to the original draft. I think lots of people have had that experience in a staff capacity.

Let me add here, parenthetically, that I always felt myself a very poor staff officer. I preferred operations. I preferred being aboard ship, if I could, running things rather than preparing papers, and I felt that essentially I was not very good at it. My writing was slow. I always envied people who could write a paper and have it come out without any misspelled words or any faults in grammar. I always felt that

my writing was not very good. However, I was intensely interested in what I was doing and I think, in my small way, I made a contribution during this particular time.

Q: Can you add something, from your point of view, to the historical record, some of the interesting details about the situation as it developed within the Joint Chiefs and as it pertained to the CNO and the Secretary of Defense, and so forth?

Adm. C.: From my level which, as you can see, was fairly far down, I did notice certain areas of basic disagreement. One of the things that always concerned me considerably was that the Air Force colonel, who later made general officer and as a matter of fact I think lives in Annapolis now, Doug Steakley, was the almost sole expert on reconnaissance. Technically, he came under the operations division, or section, within the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but he had complete access to the chairman and, I think, complete access to the White House, and his recommendations for example on overflights, further reconnaissance, were generally speaking, uncoordinated either with the other services or within the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Of course, this was primarily because of the security aspects of it, but I always felt that, since he theoretically came under my particular office as vice chief for operations, it was a difficult way to run a railroad.

Q: He had some sort of a personal relationship with Maxwell

Taylor -

Adm. C.: A personal relationship with Maxwell Taylor and, I think, a very personal relationship with the White House at that particular time. I know Admiral Riley had his problems. I felt that within the framework of the staff structure, as it was constituted, we did about as good a job in keeping the principals informed of their options as anybody possibly could.

As I said, most of our staff work was done in preparing the various options that were available, and looking at them from the point of view of the capabilities that were on hand to enforce any course of action that might be developed from these options. This gets into a very complicated bit of writing. Of course, the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed it verbally, but I remember sometimes when I didn't go to the Joint Chiefs of Staff meetings sitting and wondering what paper we'll have to generate tonight to try to answer some of the questions and alternatives that were discussed in the meeting that particular afternoon. Of course, as you remember, they met fairly constantly, day and night.

Q: I suppose one of the difficulties in developing these papers dealing with the various options was that you had no time to look at them in retrospect. I mean, they had to be done as of now?

Adm. C.: They had to be done as of now, they had to be done that night, and they had to be ready for the next morning, or even for later that night. That's the way we generally worked.

Q: And very often, we know from experience in life, when you put something down, it's as well to look at it later and re-read it.

Adm. C.: Of course, we never had that luxury. We never had the time to do that.

Looking back at some of the things, I think, as I say, that generally speaking the performance was pretty good. When it was all over, as you well know and I'm sure Admiral Riley has told you, there were a great many congratulatory messages flying around from the President and from the chairman. I frankly thought that they were sort of manifestations of relief more than anything else. I personally didn't think that they were necessarily warranted, but then I'm a sort of a basic military guy who feels that you do the job you're supposed to do and nobody's supposed to say, gee, that's the greatest thing since motherhood.

Q: Were you aware of the role of the Secretary of Defense in the whole picture and what this meant for Admiral Anderson?

Adm. C.: I was aware of it, but we were so immersed in our

day-to-day problems that I would not be qualified to comment on any of it. Of course, I knew of Admiral Anderson's problems and his role in standing up for what he believed in and allowing his commanders to do what they, on the spot, felt was the right thing. I was well aware of that. I might add that that attitude within the Navy of relying on its subordinate commanders was viewed at times with a certain amount of alarm by the Army and the Air Force, who felt that there should have been tighter control from the central command post and reliance should not be placed on people in the field. This was the basic philosophy, I think, that has always pervaded the Navy and possibly isn't quite true of the Army and the Air Force. Whether it's developed within later years or not, I really don't know.

Q: Wasn't this perhaps the first instance, full-blown instance, where the central command moved individual ships around?

Adm. C.: Oh, absolutely.

Q: And the central command was in the White House?

Adm. C.: It was in the White House, but it was through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. You see, the forces were not under the command of the CNO or the chief of staff of the Army or

the chief of staff of the Air Force. They were actually under the command of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and they operated through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, through the unified commander, who happened in this particular case to be Admiral Dennison, because all the activities were within the CinCAlt area. But that was the normal chain of command, and that continued on through the Vietnam War, because the normal chain of command was from the President, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the unified commander.

Q: Yes, CNO lost his command of the fleet.

Adm. C.: The CNO lost his command of the fleet then and never regained it.

So this basic philosophy of telling every ship right rudder or left rudder was well publicized in, I suppose, the confrontation with Admiral Anderson and the Secretary of Defense. My training and my upbringing have certainly supported the contention that the man on the spot should be allowed to make some decisions, but, as we well know, with the increased efficiency of communications and the general watching-over-the-shoulder process that has been developed, it was almost impossible to have any individual unit or ship act with any degree of initiative of their own. I think this was the part that scared me more about the procedures that were being built up - that it was, at that particular time, at least, a completely

centralized operation and one in which the forces themselves were allowed absolutely no initiative.

Of course, the whole problem was that they felt sure that had there been a rash action it was a very delicate situation that needed handling at the top, and any rash action by a subordinate down the line might upset this very delicate balance, and possibly jeopardize the whole operation, as viewed from the top. This was the only way to think of it. But it was very difficult for me - I could understand it, but I didn't agree with it. As I say, my feeling - and this was not based on any great analysis - was that when the crisis had subsided and all these congratulatory messages were flying around this was not my idea of how you run a military operation. In light of modern technology and improved communications, perhaps I was wrong.

Q: Off tape you were talking about the frenzied atmosphere in which you functioned. Admiral Ward told me the story of his role in the situation where he assumed command, I think on a Saturday, without any knowledge of what was taking place, and on Sunday flew to Washington to the Joint Chiefs with Admiral Dennison, during which time he was briefed on his role as commander of the fleet!

Adm. C.: As a matter of fact, I think I was in the JCS meeting when Corky and Admiral Dennison appeared, and I remember

the briefing. Since Corky and I had been in Op-60 together, I thought, good heavens, here's Corky one day on the job and I appeared here last week and was thrown in in my civilian clothes without any clearance, which I didn't receive until about ten days later, by the way. This was the frenzied atmosphere which persisted and continued throughout the crisis itself, obviously, but as a result the watch-keeping capabilities of the Joint Staff were continued. Additional flag officers, fortunately, were made available - flag and general officers, so that right this minute within the Joint Staff I'm sure there is a general officer on duty in the operations center. Obviously this was an outgrowth of the Cuban Missile Crisis and it continued. During my year and a half in the Joint Staff, it never really seemed to subside. There was always pressure on people. If the pressure didn't come from the White House, it came from the fact that the Joint Chiefs of Staff met and they required a paper, and just the pure mechanics of the fact were that they didn't get out until five o'clock or six o'clock, or however late they deliberated, and the staff officers had to work after they'd received their guidance, so there was always a night job. The logical question is, well, why didn't you go home during the day. You couldn't because there were routine jobs to be done during the day. So most of us worked late at night nearly every night.

Of course, at the end of the missile crisis, it subsided to a certain degree, but, at least in my view, the frenzied

aspect remained. I was fortunate in a lot of ways, at least in participating in what was certainly the historical aspect of the development of this particular process, and I'm sure it works. But it's hard for me to sit back and analyze it now, in light of my earlier training. I think that's about the simplest way of explaining it.

Shortly after the missile crisis, you remember, there was a confrontation with Castro on the water supply at Guantánamo. I can recall vividly what happened and I can almost see it, but I can't tell you precisely the date. As you say, it was within a month or so of the crisis and the actual tension had subsided, but there were still these minor irritations. Of course, the first one was when Castro shut off the water to Guantánamo.

The Director of the Joint Staff was Admiral Riley and he had a Deputy Director, who was an Army officer, and as Assistant Director, Jim Davis, who was a naval officer and he'd been commandant of the Guantánamo Naval Station at one time. So I thought it was very strange when early one afternoon General Taylor sent for me and said:

"We're having trouble in Guantánamo. I'm going to make you the action officer on Guantánamo, and we've got to go to a meeting in the White House this afternoon." So, over we went to the White House. As I remember, this was the following winter. I'd like to go back a minute to the tense time